

HISTORY OF THE DRIVER LICENSE IN TENNESSEE

- The Driver License law was enacted in 1937, and Tennessee became the 32nd state to implement regulations to license drivers;
- Applicants, applying for a driver license within the first six months after the implementation of the law, were granted a license without taking a driver's test;
- 521,571 licenses were issued without taking a test;
- The first Driver Licenses in Tennessee were obtained for 50 cents and issued by the Tennessee Highway Patrol;
- The first Driver License test was issued on April 18, 1938;
- The Department of Safety was formed in 1939;
- On July 1, 1965, the Driver License renewal was changed from a single time of year (example: all renewals due on April 1) to setting the driver's birthday as the license expiration date;
- In 1983, Driver License was moved from the Highway Patrol and established as a sovereign division within the Department of Safety, with its own chain-of-command and employee positions for Examiners;
- In 1983, the Photo Driver License Law was enacted; on March 4, 1984, the first photo driver license was issued; also in 1984, an additional 144 Driver License Examiners were hired; and 13 modular Driver License exam stations were established;
- Also, in 1989, the Commercial Driver License (CDL) program was established, requiring applicants for Commercial Class A, B, or C licenses to pass federally-standardized knowledge and skills tests;
- In June, 1996, the first written tests in Spanish, Korean and Japanese were provided for non-CDL tests;
- In October, 1996, the Department of Safety began issuing handgun carry permits and to date, has issued 367,831 handgun carry permits;
- In February, 1998, Tennessee became the first state in the nation to have CDL Examiners receive international certification through AAMVA as Certified Commercial Examiners (CCE);
- In October, 2000, the first Internet-based services were launched, allowing applicants to process non-commercial license renewals online; within six months, 200 to 300 Internet renewals were processed daily;
- On July 1, 2001, the Graduated Driver License (GDL) program was initiated; GDL's require minors to achieve specific amounts of experience with a permit and Restricted-level license before receiving full license privileges;
- In June, 2006, Driver License received approval for the creation of seven (7) new Driver License Stations and thirty-three (33) new Examiner positions; this was the first expansion of locations and staff since the Division was created in 1983;
- Driver License Stations now handle in excess of 80,000 voter registration applications annually;
- Tennessee currently has in excess of 4.2 million licensed drivers, who hold valid Tennessee Driver Licenses;
- Today, Tennessee Driver License Issuance staff handle 1.7 million transactions annually.

